

Memorandum



City of Tempe

Date: December 15, 2016
To: Mayor and Council
Through: Councilmember Navarro
From: Birchett Park Working Group
Subject: **Recommendations to Improve Birchett Park**

BACKGROUND:

Birchett Park is a three-acre park situated at the intersection 13th Street and Mill Avenue adjacent to the ASU Gammage Auditorium. It was dedicated in 1984 in honor of the Birchett Family who settled in Tempe in the early 1900's. Primarily due to its location and lack of usability due to flood irrigation, the park has long been under-used, and isn't included in the 2016/2017 Park Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

However, the park is distinctly located at the southern gateway to downtown Tempe and its proximity to the Gammage Auditorium making it a prime site for enhancement. Although park improvements aren't included in the overall Park CIP, the Tempe Streetcar Project may provide an opportunity to transform Birchett Park into an entrance to the downtown. The Working Group led by Councilmember Navarro examined different options for Birchett Park using the following objectives as a guide:

- Establishing a monument gateway feature
- Creating programmable space for residents and visitors
- Constructing a formalized pedestrian access that connects to Gammage Auditorium

DIRECTION:

Request that Council approve the continuation of exploring options to renovate Birchett Park by authorizing the creation of a park master plan funded through development impact fees since this would be considered a park expansion project. If approved, staff will return with a more firm proposal that includes a public engagement process and a cost estimate for the study for council's consideration.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Councilmember Joel Navarro

STAFF ASSISTING THE WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Don Bessler, Director Public Works
Shelly Seyler, Deputy Director Public Works
Tony Miano, Deputy Director Public Works
Craig Hayton, Parks Manager
Dave McClure, Landscape Architect
Julian Dresang, Traffic Engineer
Eric Iwersen, Transportation Planner
Elizabeth Higgins, Chief of Staff – Mayor and Council
Parrish Spisz, Council Aide

EXTERNAL PARTNERS ASSISTING THE WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

Angela Creedon, VP, Public Affairs at ASU
Rob Cox, Director, Economic Development at ASU
Kate Borders, President, Downtown Tempe Authority